



MWA Board Report

May 2021

MWA Chief Executive Officer Report

Alton B. Nelson, Jr.

WHAT

What a difference a couple of months make! Since the March meeting, more **indicators of “normalcy”** have emerged such as: 1) vaccinations have been made available to more subgroups of people (including teenagers!), 2) MWA interscholastic athletics has resumed, and 3) faculty have been allowed to return campus in Phase 1C. In terms of county indicators, infection rates are trending downwards in Contra Costa County as a whole (Orange), while local indicators for Richmond and the surrounding area is still significant (Red). The good news is that 90% or so of the MWA staff are in some phase of becoming fully vaccinated. These changes are allowing us to get excited about a pathway back to on-site learning.

There are other **factors to consider in a return to on-site learning**. Recent shifts in Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance allow fully vaccinated people to do activities outside without wearing face masks. The County Office of Education reached out to learn how many students we have between 12-18 years old. This is in anticipation that vaccinations will be made available to this age group. This age spread corresponds to about 70% or so of our current students. For next year, this could mean some 6th graders and the rest of the 7th-12th graders would be eligible for vaccinations. Given the less restrictive nature of indoor mitigations for people who are vaccinated and wearing masks means that we ***might*** expect that we could accommodate larger cohorts of students in classrooms. I think there will likely be additional shifts and new understandings as we move into the summer that will inform what fall of 2021 could look like. With staff and students vaccinated, it provides more options and assurances for those of us along a continuum of having concerns about safety. Again, we are anchoring in being able to return to campus in the fall for on-site learning, and we will continue to follow our phased in approach.

One of my key learnings this year is sometimes it's better to get out DRAFT versions of information out sooner than more FINAL version of information out later. In the past month or so, we have optimized for getting critical information out to staff sooner, providing opportunities to engage, and inviting feedback and concerns to be shared. Sometimes the feedback helps us address items we had not thought of or anticipated, while other times it has been useful in considering additional communication channels we should be utilizing. I have really appreciate this learning and feedback this year as it has allowed for a greater sense of shared ownership, a sense of being more appropriately responsive, and gaining more clarity on the specific topic being addressed. In all, my lines of sight on issues and topics has been expanded.

SO WHAT

- ***Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion***. With the increase in violence against members of the Asian and Pacific Islander community, Patrick (the CEO for Making Waves Foundation) send out joint letters of support to our respective teams acknowledging the violence and trauma, stating our ally-ship, and offering support.



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- **Student Well-Being.** As I scan daily attendance, I am seeing relatively steady levels of both participation and engagement as well as non-engagement. While the overall level of participation of students attending at least one of their classes daily is pretty high, the number of students absent during one period (by division) can be pretty high (25% or more). These levels do not corroborate with our normal attendance for every class. It is a mix of several factors that could include internet connectivity, engagement and motivation, or other factors. For this reason, we look forward to a return to on-site learning. That being said, our participation in annual state testing has been very high so far, meeting and exceeding 95%!
- **Staff Well-Being.** Staff continues to receive *Seeds of Awareness* training on strategies that promote healthy practices and mitigate effects of stress. We have also been intentional in providing spaces to process the various societal challenges. Support has looked like offering group sessions with a trusted service provider (CircleUp) and offering critical incident debriefs with Fruge Psychological Associates. In the wake of the recent Chauvin verdict (related to the death of George Floyd) and the death of a Latinx man in nearby Alameda in an encounter with police officers, these services and support have been very helpful. I have been encouraged that a number of our staff have shared appreciation for both the messages and the opportunity for support. I personally participated in one of the group sessions focused on processing the Chauvin verdict. It was helpful to be able express my thoughts and feelings with colleagues in a safe and supported space.

NOW WHAT

We are busy preparing to wrap up the 2020-21 school year, get prepared for summer programming, and prepare for the 2021-22 school year. Part of the 2021-21 close out of activities is identifying ways to honor our 8th and 12th graders, our students overall, and our staff for the great job they have done all year to maintain some degree of “normalcy” through their consistency, their care for the students, and their flexibility.

Goals & Updates for 2020-21

Goal #1

Discuss, develop, and agree on definitions, goals, and metrics in a set of cascading MOCHAs (a delegation framework – Managers, Owners, Contributors, Helpers, and Approver) in the areas of:

- *a school-wide instructional philosophy*
- *innovation in teaching and learning practices*
- *social emotional development practices*
- *insights into the experiences of our Black stakeholders at MWA (students, parents, staff, & alumni)*

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Goal #2

Co-lead the strategic plan Program Committee Team (PCT), with Patrick, to meet Year 1 milestones and goals of the new strategic plan. Examples include expanding *college access* education in earlier grades at MWA (e.g. as early as 5th grade and with targeted programming for parents and students) and identifying unique instructional practices and innovations to be able to share with others.

Goal #2 Updates

The Opt-in process has gone relatively smoothly so far. The larger leadership team comprised of MWA and CAP leadership have a retreat planned for May 7th to dive deeper and better align around shared beliefs and approach as well as engage in some consultancies related to CAP and MWA college and career counseling.